

## Methods of Singing Instruction in Early Childhood Education in Japan

-Difference between Teachers for Children under and over 3 Years Old-

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### I . Objectives

In early childhood education, singing is frequently used in daily activities. Observing them, one might notice that some children participate in singing with their mouth wide open and lively facial expressions, while the others only mumble with a blank look on their face. The way these children sing seems to have a lot to do with their teacher's perspective toward singing instruction.

The study of singing instruction by questionnaires has been conducted by Tabota (2004); Kato (2013; 2014); Kato, Furukawa & Kakuto (2015); Okazaki & Omi (2017) et al. These questionnaires consisted of: songs they use in the activities, reasons of song choice, musical instruments they use for accompaniment, instructional methods, et al. Tabota (2004) placed the questions regarding how the teachers perceive the way their children sing (such as "children sing while listening to the accompaniment well", "children enjoy singing when a simple movement is added" et al). According to this study, Tabota suggested that the teacher's perspective and attitude toward singing instruction greatly influence how the children would sing. This conclusion, however, draws the insight from the questionnaire regarding how teachers perceive the way their children sing, which does not investigate how the teachers feel about their own singing instruction. It is crucial to recognize how the teachers in early childhood education perceive their own singing instruction.

Therefore, our study was carried out over teachers in early childhood education in an attempt to reveal how singing instruction is done and how the teachers perceive their own instruction.

According to the study of the development of singing ability, the children over 2 years old and a half are able to sing spontaneously a portion of a song, and those over 3 years old are capable of singing an entire song (Rosamund, 1968; Hargreaves, 1986; Fuchida, 2009). It is indicated that the children over 3 years old sing a variety of songs and make a medley out of the fractions of these songs (Gembris, 2006) so that it has become clear that there is a significant difference in the way the children sing between those under and over 3 years old. In addition, McDonald & Simons (1989) suggested that there is a difference in the methods of singing instruction they receive between the children under and over 3 years old, as the children under 2 years old tend to experience music through one-to-one activities with their parents or teachers such as singing to them or playing with songs, the children between 2 years old and a half and 3 years old tend to sing and move together with their parents or teachers, and the

children over 3 years old who have developed social awareness tend to sing together with other children in musical activities.

Moreover, in regard to the planning of instruction and the matters requiring special attention, the Childcare Guidelines (2017) defined by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in Japan makes a distinction between children under and over 3 years old. For this matter, Sakata (2017), in regard to the instruction of picture books, suggested that the teacher's ability to read picture books aloud for children under 3 years old must be considered because it is the children's essential form of interaction with the picture books, while for children over 3 years old the environment in which they can choose what they are interested in becomes essential as they start reading holding the picture books in their own hands.

These studies suggest there would be a difference in the methods of singing instruction between the teachers for children under and over 3 years old. Therefore, the survey was conducted between the two groups of teachers, the ones for children under 3 years old and those in charge of children over 3 years old.

## **II. Method**

### **(1) Survey Method**

#### **① Participants**

From the prefectures of Hyogo (n=9), Ibaraki (n=9), Osaka (n=5), Tokyo (n=2), Saitama (n=2), Tochigi (n=2), Aichi (n=1), Nara (n=1), and Kyoto (n=1), at 32 early childhood educational institutions including kindergartens, certified daycares, and nursery schools, 300 teachers were asked to fill out a questionnaire. 267 (89%) responded. In the case of multiple teachers looking after a single class, only one teacher per class was asked to respond.

#### **② Period**

The survey was conducted from June through October in 2018, as well as from October through December in 2019.

#### **③ Questionnaire**

The survey was conducted through a self-completion questionnaire. The content of the questionnaire, referencing to the studies of Uzuka (2000), Tatemoto (2008), Valerio, Reynolds, Grego, and Yap & McNair (2011), consisted of 6 categories with 21 items such as 1) Face sheet, 2) Frequency of singing activities at an institution, how many songs they sing, and the names of songs, 3) How they choose songs, 4) How they introduce songs to children, 5) Perspective of teachers who interact with children through music at the institution, and 6) Performance skills of teachers.

#### **④ Procedure**

The questionnaire was distributed by the principals of the institutions including kindergartens, certified daycares, and nursery schools where the participants worked. The completed questionnaires were collected by detention method.

### ⑤ Ethical Consideration

Prior to the survey, our objectives were explained at the institutions and permission was obtained from the principals.

To the participants, “Request to Participate in Survey” was distributed along with the questionnaire to explain the survey method and ethical consideration. The explanation clearly stated that 1) this survey asks how children interact with music in early childhood education, 2) There are no correct or wrong answers, 3) Participants are expected to answer exactly the way they feel, 4) The survey is voluntary and no demerit shall arise from participation, 5) Even after having started the survey, participants are entitled to decline answering to the questions they feel uncomfortable with, or to discontinue the survey itself.

To note, this survey was conducted upon the approval from the Ethics Committee of Faculty of Medicine at Tsukuba University (approval number 1245).

## III. Outcome

### ① Participant Demographics

Participant demographics are reported in Table 1. Sex ratio was 98% Female (n=263) and 1% Male (n=4). Generation ratio was 51% in their 20s (n=137), 26% in their 30s (n=69), 15% in their 40s (n=41), and 7% in their 50s (n=19). Workplace ratio showed 30% kindergartens (n=81), 29% nursery schools (n=77), and 41% certified daycares (n=109). Class Age Group ratio was 20% 5 years old (n=53), 22% 4 years old (n=58), 24% 3 years old (n=64), and 33% 2 years old or under (n=88). Job Experience on average was 9.3 years (SD=7.20), Keyboard Skills Experience (how long they have been playing keyboard instruments such as piano, organ, and electone (Yamaha electronic organ), et al.) on average was 14.11 years (SD=11.07).

### ② Musical Preference and Performance Skills

Musical preference and performance skills of the participants were surveyed in multiple-choice questions (multiple answers allowed). In Table 2, 91% reported “Love listening to music”, 70% “Love singing”, 55% “Not good at singing with self-accompaniment”, 36% “Able to sing with sheet music alone without being taught”, 22% “Good at singing with self-accompaniment”, 5% “Competed in a show or competition related to singing”.

“Love singing” was chosen by nearly 70% of the teachers, yet only around 30% reported “Able to sing with sheet music alone without being taught”. This suggests more than half the participants saw themselves not good at singing with self-accompaniment.

### ③ Frequency of Singing Activities in a Week

#### 1) Frequency of Singing

In regard to how frequently teachers sing to or with children at their institutions,

Table 1. Participant demographics

Sex		
	Female	98% (n=263)
	Male	2% (n=4)
Generation ratio		
	20s	51% (n=137)
	30s	26% (n=69)
	40s	15% (n=41)
	50s	7% (n=19)
	N/A	1% (n=1)
Workplace		
	kindergartens	30% (n=81)
	nursery schools	29% (n=77)
	certified daycares	41% (n=109)
Class Age Group		
	5 years old	20% (n=53)
	4 years old	22% (n=58)
	3 years old	24% (n=64)
	2 years old or under	33% (n=88)
	N/A	2% (n=4)
Job Experience on average	9.3 years	(SD=7.2)
Keyboard Skills Experience on average	14.11years	(SD=11.07)

Table 2. Musical preference and performance skills of the participants (multiple-choice)

Love listening to music	91% (n=243)
Love singing	70% (n=186)
Not good at singing with self-accompaniment	55% (n=145)
Able to sing with sheet music alone without being taught	36% (n=96)
Good at singing with self-accompaniment	22% (n=59)
Competed in a show or competition related to singing	5% (n=13)
n=266	(multiple answers)

they were asked to choose from “everyday”, “4 or 5 days a week”, and “2 or 3 days a week” (Table 3). In the result, the highest reported was “everyday”, which came from 89% of the teachers for children under 3 years old and 75% of those taking care of children over 3 years old. To verify whether there is a difference between the two groups of teachers in charge of under and over 3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted. There was statistical significance ( $\chi^2(2)=7.169, p < 0.5$ ).

For this result, Table 4 reports the calculation with adjusted residuals. According to the Table, “everyday” showed a higher significance in the teachers for children under

3 years old. In other words, it was confirmed that more teachers in charge of children under 3 years old sing “everyday”, compared to those taking care of children over 3 years old.

## 2) Number of Songs

The number of songs teachers would sing to or with children in a typical week at early childhood educational institutions was reported through the choices from “about 1 song”, “about 2-3 songs”, “about 4-5 songs”, or “more than 6 songs” (Table 5). The result shows that both groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old indicated the highest ratio in “about 2-3 songs”; 43% in those for children under 3 years old and 44% among the ones in charge of children over 3 years old. The second highest was “about 4-5 songs”, which turned out to be around 30%.

To verify whether there is a difference between the two groups of teachers in charge of children under and over 3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted. The statistical relationship, however, turned out to be insignificant.

Table 3. Frequency of singing in a Week

	Under 3 years old (n=83)	Over 3 years old (n=174)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value (df=2)
Everyday	89% (n=74)	75% (n=131)	7.169*
4 or 5 days a week	3% (n=3)	12% (n=21)	
2 or 3 days a week	7% (n=6)	13% (n=22)	

\*:  $p < 0.05$

Table 4. Adjusted residuals for Table 3

	Under 3 years old	Over 3 years old
Everyday	2.6	-2.6
4 or 5 days a week	-2.2	2.2
2 or 3 days a week	-1.3	1.3

Table 5. Number of songs sung in a week

	Under 3 years old (n=87)	Over 3 years old (n=172)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value (df=3)
about 1 song	2% (n=2)	5% (n=9)	n. s.
about 2-3 songs	43% (n=37)	44% (n=75)	
about 4-5 songs	31% (n=27)	32% (n=55)	
more than 6 songs	24% (n=21)	19% (n=33)	

## ④ Song Choice

As seen in Table 6, “Strategies for Song Choice” was asked through multiple-questions (multiple answers allowed). The result shows that many teachers chose “according to the season” (96% of the teachers taking care of children under 3 years old, and 95% of those in charge of children over 3 years old) and “according to events” (88% in those taking care of children under 3 years old, and 85% in those taking care of children over 3 years old).

To verify whether there is a difference between the two groups of teachers in charge of children under and over 3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted. “Songs using hands or body movements” and “songs with simple lyrics” showed statistical significance (in the same order,  $\chi^2(1)=49.185$ ,  $p<0.01$ ,  $\chi^2(1)=14.854$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). These suggest that the teachers in charge of children under 3 years old, compared to those in charge of children above 3 years old, tend to choose “songs using hands or body movements” and “songs with simple lyrics”.

## ⑤ Strategies to Introduce New Songs

As seen in Table 7 regarding “Strategies to introduce new songs to children”, the teachers were asked to choose most appropriate answers from multiple-choice questions (multiple answers allowed). The result showed that many chose “Talk about lyric-related topics with children”: 51% among the teachers for children under 3 years old and 66% among those in charge of children over 3 years old. To verify whether there is a difference between the two groups of teachers in charge of children under and over

Table6. Strategies for Song (multiple-choice)

	Under 3 years old (n=88)	Over 3 years old (n=175)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value or p value※
According to the season	96% (n=84)	95% (n=167)	n. s.※
According to events	88% (n=77)	85% (n=148)	n. s.
According to the development of children in class	66% (n=58)	63% (n=110)	n. s.
Songs with easy rhythms for kids	61% (n=54)	57% (n=99)	n. s.
Songs using hands or body movements	81% (n=71)	35% (n=61)	49.19**
Songs with simple lyrics	58% (n=51)	33% (n=58)	14.85**
Songs with happier moods	43% (n=38)	35% (n=61)	n. s.
Simplify accompaniment when too hard to play	32% (n=28)	37% (n=64)	n. s.
Songs with simple melodies	19% (n=17)	21% (n=36)	n. s.

\*:p<0.05, \*\*: p<0.01 ※:Fisher's Exact Test

(multiple answers)

Table 7. Strategies to introduce new songs to children (multiple-choice)

	Under 3 years old (n=88)	Over 3 years old (n=175)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value or p value※ (df=1)
Talk about lyric-related topics with children	51% (n=45)	66% (n=115)	5.22*
Use instruments to play and sing both lyrics and melodies (phrases)	35% (n=31)	54% (n=94)	8.03*
Explain lyrics using visual aids such as drawings as well as words	40% (n=35)	44% (n=77)	n. s.
Explain lyrics using words alone	26% (n=23)	50% (n=87)	13.38**
Use instruments to play and sing the melody (phrase)	34% (n=30)	30% (n=52)	n. s.
Use instruments to play the melody (phrase) alone	9% (n=8)	25% (n=44)	9.55*
Sing or hum melodies (phrases) without playing instruments	5% (n=4)	4% (n=7)	n. s.※

\*:p&lt;0.05、\*\* : &lt;0.01 ※:Fisher's Exact Test

(multiple answers)

3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted. Showed significance were “Talk about lyric-related topics with children”, “Use instruments to play and sing the melody (phrase)”, “Explain lyrics using words alone”, and “Use only instruments to play the melody (phrase) alone” (in the same order,  $\chi^2(1)=5.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\chi^2(1)=8.03$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\chi^2(1)=13.378$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $\chi^2(1)=9.55$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

“Talk about lyric-related topics with children”, “Use instruments to play and sing the melody (phrase)”, “Explain lyrics with words alone”, and “Use instruments to play the melody (phrase) alone”: All of these indicated statistical significance among the teachers in charge of children over 3 years old. In other words, it means that the teachers in charge of children over 3 years old, compared to those taking care of children under 3 years old, carried on the strategies of “Talk about lyric-related topics with children”, “Use instruments to play and sing the melody (phrase)”, “Explain lyrics using words alone”, and “Use instruments to play the melody (phrase) alone”.

#### ⑥ Use of the Wall in the Classroom

Regarding whether they put up lyrics or sheet music on the wall in the classroom, the frequency such as “Always”, “Sometimes”, and “never” was asked (Table 8). The result indicates that 94% of the teachers in charge of children under 3 years old answered either “Never” or “Rarely”, while 54% of those in charge of children over 3 years chose

the same. To verify whether there is a difference between the group that chose “Always” or “Sometimes” and the group that chose “Never” or “Rarely”, a chi-squared test was conducted. The result showed statistical significance. ( $\chi^2(1)=41.788, p < 0.01$ ).

When asked whether putting up on the wall either “Lyrics alone”, “Melody (phrase) alone”, or “Lyrics and melody both”, the majority of teachers in both groups answered “Lyrics alone”.

#### ⑦ Emphasis in Singing Instruction

Teachers were asked to report, when kids are engaged in singing activities, how much emphasis they put on either “Memorize lyrics”, “Memorize a melody (phrase)”, or “Feel music through the body” using a 5-point Likert Scale (Figure 1). The average and standard deviation for each item were: “Memorize lyrics” reported 3.22 (SD=1.19) for the teachers in charge of children under 3 years old and 4.19 (SD=0.78) for those in charge of children over 3 years old, “Memorize a melody (phrase)” 3.36 (SD=1.13) for those in charge of children under 3 years old and 4.15 (SD=0.78) for those in charge of children over 3 years old, and “Feel music through the body” 3.99 (SD=0.98) for those in charge of children under 3 years old and 3.97 (SD=0.86) for those in charge of children over 3 years old. To verify whether there is a difference between the two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted. “Memorize lyrics” and “Memorize a melody (phrase)” showed statistical significance (in the same order,  $t(261) = 7.9, p < .001$ ,  $t(261) = 6.6, p < .001$ ). “Feel music through the body” indicated no significance.

#### ⑧ Perspective toward Singing Activities

In regard to the perspective of the teachers toward singing activities in the classroom, a 4-point scale questionnaire with items such as “Frequently”, “Sometimes”, “Rarely”, and “Never” was used.

Regarding “Dance or move their body with children while singing” (Table9), if “Frequently” and “Sometimes” both combined, 95% (n=83) of the teachers for children under 3 years old chose these answers, and so did 88% (n=152) of those in charge of children over 3 years old. To verify whether there is a difference between the two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted and the result indicated statistical significance ( $\chi^2(3)=10.037, p < 0.05$ ).

For this result, Table10 shows the outcome with the adjusted residuals considered. According to the table, it is suggested that “Frequently” among the teachers for children under 3 years old showed statistical significance. Therefore, it is suggested that the teachers for children under 3 years old, compared to those for children over 3 years old, do more “frequently” “dance or move their body with children while singing”.



Table 8. Frequency of putting up music on the wall

	Under 3 years old (n=87)	Over 3 Years old (n=174)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value (df=1)
Rarely/Never	94% (n=82)	55% (n=95)	41.788**
Always/Sometimes	6% (n=5)	45% (n=79)	

\*\* : p<0.01

	Not emphasized	Barely emphasize	Neither	Relatively emphasized	Highly emphasized	Average (SD)		t value (df=261)
						Under 3years old (n=88)	Over 3years old (n=175)	
Memorize lyrics	1	2	3	4	5	3.22 (1.19)	4.19 (0.78)	7.9**
Memorize melodies	1	2	3	4	5	3.36 (1.13)	4.15 (0.78)	6.6**
Feel music through the body	1	2	3	4	5	3.99 (0.98)	3.97 (0.86)	0.2

\*\* : p<0.01

Figure 1. Emphasis on singing instruction

Table9. Dance or move their body with children while singing

	Under 3 years old (n=88)	Over 3 years old (n=171)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value (df=3)
Frequently	65% (n=57)	44% (n=76)	10.037*
Sometimes	30% (n=26)	44% (n=76)	
Rarely	5% (n=4)	10% (n=17)	
Never	1% (n=1)	1% (n=2)	

\*: p<0.05

Table 10. Adjusted residuals for Table 9

	Under 3 years old	Over 3 years old
Frequently	3.1	-3.1
Sometimes	-2.3	2.3
Rarely	-1.5	1.5
Never	0	0

Regarding “Sing occasion-appropriate songs to children” (Table 11), if “Frequently” and “Sometimes” both combined, 89% of the teachers for children under 3 years old as well as 80% of those in charge of children over 3 years old chose as such, which indicates more than 80% of the teachers “frequently” or “sometimes” “sing occasion-appropriate songs to children”. To verify whether there is a difference between the two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted and the result indicated statistical significance ( $\chi^2(3)=13.349$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

For this result, Table 12 shows the outcome with the adjusted residuals considered. According to the table, it is suggested that “Frequently” among the teachers for children under 3 years old showed statistical significance. Therefore, it is suggested that the teachers for children under 3 years old, compared to those in charge over 3 years old, do more “frequently” “sing occasion-appropriate songs to children”.

Regarding “Curious about Other Teachers’ Singing Instruction” (Table 13), if “Frequently” and “Sometimes” both combined, 70% of the teachers for children under 3 years old as well as 81% of those in charge of children over 3 years old answered as such. To verify whether there is a difference between the teachers for children under 3 years old and the ones for children over 3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted, but no significance was indicated.

However, regarding “Compare the quality of singing to other classes” (Table 14), if “Frequently” and “Sometimes” both combined, 31% ( $n=27$ ) of the teachers for children under 3 years old as well as 57% ( $n=98$ ) of those for children over 3 years old answered as such, which indicates nearly 60% of the teachers for children over 3 years old tends to “compare the quality of singing to other classes”. To verify whether there is a difference between the two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted. The result indicated statistical significance ( $\chi^2(3)=23.353$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

For this result, Table 15 shows the outcome with the adjusted residuals considered. According to the table, it is suggested that “Frequently” among the teachers for children over 3 years old showed statistical significance. Therefore, it is suggested that the teachers for children over 3 years old, compared to those in charge of under 3 years old, do more “frequently” “compare the quality of singing to other classes”.

Regarding “Overwhelmed with Singing Instruction” (Table 16), if “Frequently” and “Sometimes” both combined, 27% of the teachers for children under 3 years old as well as 34% of those in charge of children over 3 years old chose as such. To verify whether there is a difference between the two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old, a chi-squared test was conducted and showed statistical significance ( $\chi^2(3)=8.043$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). For this result, Table 17 shows the outcome with the adjusted residuals considered. According to the table, it is suggested that “Frequently” among the teachers for children over 3 years old showed statistical significance. Therefore, it is suggested that the teachers for children over 3 years old, compared to those in charge of under 3 years old, do more “frequently” feel “overwhelmed with singing instruction”.

Table 11. Sing occasion-appropriate songs to children

	Under 3 years old (n=87)	Over 3 years old (n=174)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value (df=3)
Frequently	47% (n=41)	25% (n=43)	13.349*
Sometimes	42% (n=37)	55% (n=96)	
Rarely	9% (n=8)	17% (n=29)	
Never	2% (n=2)	3% (n=6)	

\*:  $p < 0.05$

Table 12. Adjusted residuals for Table 11

	Under 3 years old	Over 3 years old
Frequently	3.6	-3.6
Sometimes	-2	2
Rarely	-1.7	1.7
Never	-0.5	0.5

Table 13. Curious about Other Teachers' Singing Instruction

	Under 3 years old (n=88)	Over 3 years old (n=172)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value (df=3)
Frequently	28% (n=25)	29% (n=49)	n. s.
Sometimes	42% (n=37)	52% (n=89)	
Rarely	22% (n=19)	17% (n=30)	
Never	8% (n=7)	3% (n=4)	

Table 14. Compare the quality of singing to other classes

	Under 3 years old (n=88)	Over 3 years old (n=174)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value (df=3)
Frequently	6% (n=5)	16% (n=27)	23.353**
Sometimes	25% (n=22)	41% (n=71)	
Rarely	38% (n=33)	33% (n=57)	
Never	32% (n=28)	11% (n=19)	

\*\* :  $p < 0.01$

Table 15. Adjusted residuals for Table 14

	Under 3 years old	Over 3 years old
Frequently	-2.3	2.3
Sometimes	-2.5	2.5
Rarely	0.8	-0.8
Never	4.2	-4.2

Table 16. Overwhelmed with Singing Instruction

	Under 3 Years old (n=87)	Over 3 years old (n=171)	Pearson's $\chi^2$ value (df=3)
Frequently	1% (n=1)	8% (n=14)	8.043*
Sometimes	26% (n=23)	26% (n=44)	
Rarely	46% (n=40)	50% (n=85)	
Never	26% (n=23)	16% (n=28)	

\*: p&lt;0.05

Table 17. Adjusted residuals for Table 16

	Under 3 years old	Over 3 years old
Frequently	-2.3	2.3
Sometimes	0.1	-0.1
Rarely	-0.6	0.6
Never	1.9	-1.9

#### IV. Discussion

To the question what they emphasize in children's singing as a teacher (Figure 1), the result shows that the teachers for children under 3 years old value "Feel music through the body" more than "Memorize lyrics" or "Memorize a melody". On the other hand, the teachers for children over 3 years old value "Memorize lyrics" and "Memorize a melody" more than "Feel music through the body". This suggests the two groups of teachers tend to emphasize the different aspects in singing activities.

Considering this result as well as the items that indicated statistical significance between the two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old, the following discussion shall be made.

Among the items that indicated statistical significance between the two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old, "Frequency of Singing Activities in a Week" is noted to have shown the significantly higher ratio among the teachers in charge of children under 3 years old, compared to those taking care of children over 3

years old. While 89% of the former answered “Everyday”, did so only 70 % of the latter. In addition, “Songs using hands or body movements” were chosen by 81% of the former while 35% of the latter chose as such. “Dance or move with children while singing” is “frequently” done by 65% of the former while so did 44% of the latter. 47% of the former sings “occasion-appropriate songs to children” while 25% of the latter did the same. From these outcomes, it is suggested that nearly 90% of children under 3 years old engage in singing activities everyday, and as the content of the activities, their teachers tend to choose “songs using hands or body movements” or to “dance or move the body with children while singing”. Therefore, it suggests that their teachers emphasize to “feel music through the body”.

Next, for the teacher in charge of children over 3 years old, the average value from both “Memorize lyrics” and “Memorize a melody” came out above 4, which was larger than that from “Feel music through the body”. Moreover, among the items that indicated statistical significance between the two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old, what scored higher among the teachers taking care of children over 3 years old compared to those in charge of children under 3 years old were: in regard to utilizing the wall of the classroom, “Putting up the melody and lyrics both” was chosen by 11% of the teachers for children under 3 years old while by 59% of those in charge of children over 3 years old, and “Lyrics alone” by 7% of the former while 55% of the latter chose so. Regarding strategies to introduce new songs, “Talk about lyric-related topics with children” was chosen by 51% of the teachers for children under 3 years old while by 66% of those in charge of children over 3 years old, and “Explain lyrics using words alone” by 26% of the former while by 50% of the latter. The strategies such as “Putting up lyrics on the wall in the classroom”, “Talk about lyric-related topics with children”, and “Explain lyrics by words alone” were more widely adapted among the teachers taking care of children over 3 years old than those in charge of children under 3 years old. Kato (2013) stated that the teachers for children over 3 years old tend to demonstrate a song to children first, and then, they sing the song with children repeatedly. These facts suggest that the teachers for children over 3 years old tend to “emphasize lyrics” more than to “feel music through the body”.

Next, the author would like to address the items “Compare the quality of singing to other classes” and “Overwhelmed with singing instruction”, which indicated statistical significance between the two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old.

Regarding “Compare the quality of singing to other classes”, if “Frequently” and “Sometimes” both combined, 30% of the teachers for children under 3 years old as well as nearly 60% of those in charge of children over 3 years old answered as such. Statistical significance was also indicated between these two groups as well. Then, regarding “Overwhelmed with singing instruction”, if “frequently” and “sometimes” both combined, 27% of the teachers taking care of children under 3 years old answered

as such, and so did 34% of those in charge of children over 3 years old. If “frequently” alone, 1% (n=1) of the former while 8% of the latter chose as such, and also, statistical significance was indicated here. It is reported that in singing instruction for children over 3 years old, teachers tend to seek “accomplishment” in regard to the pitches and loudness of children’s voices that anybody can judge easily (Kato, 2013), and the instruction tends to focus on the quality in singing voices, which makes the teachers feel overwhelmed with singing instruction (Kato, 2014), and often vanity takes over (Kato, 2013). Taking these aspects into consideration, it is suggested that the teachers for children over 3 years old, compared to those in charge of children under 3 years old, may have the tendency to “compare the quality of singing to other classes” and feel “overwhelmed with singing instruction”.

As for the strategies to introduce new songs to children, statistical significance was indicated in both “Use instruments to play and sing both lyrics and the melody (phrase)” that is chosen by 35% of the teachers for children under 3 years old as well as 54% of those in charge of children over 3 years old, and “Use instruments to play the melody (phrase) alone” that is chosen by 9% of the former while 25% for the latter. It has been revealed that the ratio of the teachers who accompany children’s singing with instruments goes higher as the age (grade) of children goes older (Tabota, 2004). And also, our study regarding the performance skills of teachers shows that 55% of them feel “not good at singing with self-accompaniment”. Judging from the previous research that indicates teachers without piano skills are not good at singing instruction (Kato, 2013), it is suggested that feeling “not good at singing with self-accompaniment” becomes one of the causes for the teachers to feel “overwhelmed with singing instruction”.

Lastly, as to how they choose songs, 95% of the teachers (96% of those for children under 3 years old, 95% of those in charge of children over 3 years old) answered “according to the season”, while 64% (66% of the former and 63% of the latter) answered “according to the children’s development in class”. To develop a study plan, there are three key elements such as overseeing children’s development, considering the change of seasons, and creating an environment (Teramura, 2019). Our study shows that only about 60% of the teachers answered “according to the children’s development in class”. This fact seems to affect how children would sing.

## **V. Future Prospect**

Our study through a questionnaire examined the teachers’ perspective toward singing instruction for children in early childhood education. Based on the research, the author would like to learn and reveal how the perspective of the teachers affects the singing activities of children.

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## **Methods of Singing Instruction in Early Childhood Education in Japan**

-Difference between teachers for children under and over 3 years old-

FUCHIDA Yoko

In early childhood education, singing activities are frequently used in daily activities. How children sing seems to be affected by their teachers' perspective toward singing instruction.

This study was conducted over 267 teachers in early childhood education (88 for children under 3 years old and 179 for children over 3 years old), and through a self-completion questionnaire the perspective toward singing instruction between these two groups of teachers for children under and over 3 years old was analyzed.

As a result, it is suggested that nearly 90% of children under 3 years old engage in singing activities daily, and their teachers choose "songs using hands or body movements" and "dance or move with children while singing". On the other hand, it is suggested that the teachers for children over 3 years old tend to "emphasize lyrics", "compare the quality of singing to other classes", and feel "overwhelmed with singing instruction".